Wiki Post #1

Summary:

The novel starts off with the introduction of the main character, assumed to be Mark Mathabane, the author. He and his family, his father, mother, younger sister, and younger brother live in South Africa. The government during this time was composed of whites and they tried to take control over the blacks. Their family was very poor and did not meet the standards that the police had. They didn’t have pass books that said they were employed and could live in their house. The police would constantly go on raids to find people that were living illegally. Mark was too young to realize what exactly it all was for but he was exposed to the racism and apartheid from a very early age. At one point their father is arrested for being unemployed and they have to live without him for several months. They find themselves facing starvation because they don’t have any money to get meals. Their mother takes them out to scavenge for whatever they can find, but for the most part the family just gets used to the feeling of hunger. When their father comes home it is slightly better, but not much. Around this time a group of evangelists had set up a tent and were teaching Christianity to the people. Even though their father was strictly against Christianity their mother convinced him to go, since she thought it might make their lives better. However, during the speech their father becomes severely angered and they aren’t allowed to come back. Soon after, while Mark was out, he came across a small group of boys that said he could earn food and money if he went inside with them. He was unaware that these boys were prostituting themselves, and narrowly escapes. He never tells anybody what happened, but he is also unaware that everybody knows about these terrible events taking place.

Analysis:

I find this novel to be very enlightening on the topic of apartheid. Before reading this novel I had never read anything about the kinds of trauma that went on during this time in South Africa. The thing that surprised me the most is how much Mark has to deal with when he is only five years old. In other countries children his age live a carefree life and are completely innocent, whereas Mark lives in a completely different world where he has seen and been through horrible experiences. I think it’s terrible that people have to live like Mark’s family do, and it’s one of those times where it really makes you grateful for what you have. It also makes the problems that we go through seem like nothing at all, and I think it’s amazing that people can get past living such a hard life and make something of themselves.

Application:

This novel is a great example of how human characteristics span culture. There are obviously a lot of differences between the lifestyle of people living in the ghettos in South Africa and someone like us, here in America today, but there are aspects of life that are the same. The fact that Mark wanted to escape from the men shows that he has morals. I think a good part of it may have been fear, but there is also a moral factor, because if he hadn’t left he could have gotten money and food. I think this trait is the same in every human being. We don’t all have the same morals, but there are certain things that every person feels strongly about and everybody has their limits on what is and what is not acceptable. Another similarity is the importance of family. Mark’s parents do everything for their family and try so hard to make sure that their family is able to stay together. They risk their lives by living illegally just so they don’t have to live apart from each other. In our society the sense of urgency is not there, but the love for family is evident. We are always spending time with each other and trying to help each other out. While there are many differences in the human characteristics in Mark’s culture and our own American culture, there are still some characteristics we have in common.